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centuries of careful observations. I collected 250 of these signs and placed them in the following general categories: density, location, and time of mist; type of frost and heaviness of dew; size and position of rings around sun and moon; color and conformation of sky and clouds at particular times of the day; density and location of fog banks; position and time of rainbows; clarity, closeness, and color of Inis Thiar and the mainland; changes in the weather in relation to tides; actions of animals; and pains in the human body. Of special interest are the signs associated with animal behavior, such as the height at which swallows fly, the prevalence of fly hordes, the crowing of roosters and braying of asses, the position that cats assume at the hearth, and whether or not spiders weave their webs across trails. The expert forecaster will weigh together as many as ten signs before announcing his prediction, and I once collected 16 from an old man in Low Village assessing conditions 12 hours hence. Some signs are quite obviously undependable, among them the quacking of ducks which some say will "call" rain, and the scratching of floors and furniture by cats which, according to others, will point the direction of the wind following a shift in the near future. The folk believe that the moon and tides exert a profound influence on both weather and human behavior; my wife on one occasion was told that her "snappish" mood (the words of a neighbor, not mine) was caused by the new moon.

The climate, in part, determines the conception of seasons held by the islanders. Four seasons are recognized, but their duration deviates from the norm of Western culture. Winter is conceived as embracing only December and January, while spring is thought to commence in February and end in early April. The other two seasons are not so well defined, but most folk agree that summer takes up the greater part of the year—from April until mid-September—and autumn the remaining three months. December and January are regarded as the coldest months, during which time there is a lull in economic activities, but planting begins early in February. Although the prevailing winds during the year are from the west and southwest, for several weeks between January and mid-March icy winds blow steadily from the southeast quarter and cause much physical discomfort and illness. In late March and early April, temperatures rise rapidly, and some islanders believe that March "steals" three days from April so that summer cannot be expected until after April 3rd. The circumstances of the theft are revealed in a legend.

The reason that summer is thought to extend for so long is a psychological one: the folk dislike winter with its cold and dampness and attendant sickness and the sense of isolation from the world that it brings. Few outsiders visit Inis Beag during the winter, and often the steamer is unable to leave port or must turn back because of gales or high seas. It is not out of the ordinary for the island to be totally isolated for a week or ten days because of inclement conditions. From late January on, warm weather is anticipated eagerly, and I was told time and again that summer was imminent when spells of cold and rainy weather occurred between March and June of 1960. During a quarrel with her husband over his confident weather forecasting ability, a woman noted for being an outspoken realist declared, "Inis Beag has only one summer month—July."

The island experiences but eight hours of daylight, from nine o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon, at the time of the winter solstice, and

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with me in my research; thus, I am forced to depend on data about his career provided me by his neighbors. It is hard to disentangle fact from hearsay in these materials, for he arouses extremes of feeling among islanders which can prompt distortions of information. I was told by several respondents—bitter foes of the king—that he conceives of himself as the moral guardian of the folk "who knows what is best for them;" he believes them to possess a childlike mentality and outlook on the world which necessitate his guidance (In talking with these respondents, who referred to the king as "the little priest," I was reminded of interviews in Africa seven years earlier concerning particular British colonial administrators, who conceived of their relationship with the Nigerians in like manner.).

A personable man of great charm, the king has a measure of charisma which commands deference and respect, and it is said that had he chosen to become a priest or businessman on the mainland, he would now be a bishop or captain of industry. His business acumen is acclaimed, and many have become his customers because they believe him to be more "clever" than city merchants and well able to deal with them to the advantage of the islanders. The sources of his power are many. He began his career as a shopkeeper in the 1920s, with money provided him by a brother living in the United States (or, as claimed by some, with the insurance money that he received as a beneficiary when his brother was killed while serving in the armed forces of this country). Two brothers older than himself—the eldest the landholder—live in Inis Beag with large families, and he has their support and that of his many other kin. He gained a large following during the depression years of the 1930s by extending credit to customers for months without charging interest; many folk still show gratitude for this gesture by buying only from him and by acquiescing to many of his wishes, although covertly they may resent being in his debt and under his influence. He is a friend of priests, politicians, and civil servants, who usually reside in his guest house when visiting Inis Beag, and he is a political activist in behalf of "Dev" and Fianna Fail. Another source of his power is the fact that he cashes most of the checks and changes most of the foreign currency received by the islanders, and thus knows of sources and amounts of income; it is feared that he might inform government officials of remittances and as a result jeopardize the old age and dole of any who earn his displeasure.

The king is most criticized for his "great riches," which arouse envy and jealousy in his neighbors. From time to time, rumors as to the amount of money deposited to his account in a mainland bank pass around Inis Beag, and arouse discussion of the bill of particulars against him. His involvement in the salvaging of the cargo of the grounded freighter brought to the surface all of the hostility toward him felt by the folk. He is supposed to have pooled his resources with several businessmen "from the city" to purchase the most valuable items of the cargo for resale at a "vast profit;" to safeguard these items until they could be salvaged and shipped off on the steamer, he consorted with owners of the steamship company, customs officials, the guards, and even the curate to prevent the islanders ("who only saved the lives of the crew") from observing the law of wrack and thereby reducing his profit. It is held that he persuaded the curate to deliver sermons denouncing the "looting" of the ship as sinful, and he allowed his

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able degree, has been dominated by parents who have allowed him to take on few major responsibilities, has a mother who acts as a wife surrogate in all but the sexual sphere (at least consciously), has established a routinized existence, and has male companions for whom he feels affection and with whom he shares numerous work and recreational activities. Some men who have been promised or willed land, and who have consenting parents and brides-to-be, will balk at a match because they are "too happy with the lads," and, if persuaded to marry, they will attempt to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage—"The men run with the boys before marriage and carry on the same afterward." Several bachelors and spinsters almost have married several times in succession, only to find the sexual commitment on each occasion too difficult to make at the last moment.

Before the coming of a permanent priest to Inis Beag, it is asserted that young people contemplating marriage were able to "keep company" frequently and openly before the union was arranged, and that some pairings were "love matches." But since then—with the separation of the sexes from late infancy on, the ubiquity of gossip and opprobrium, and the actions of priests—courting almost has disappeared, and it is not uncommon for a couple awaiting their wedding to have little personal knowledge of one another. Contact on the island between the sexes today is limited to meetings at the few parties which take place, at the occasional summer dances, or *céilí*, held on a large flagging near the school, and sometimes "at the well" or "walking to the cow" during daylight hours. Two generations ago, private Sunday afternoon strolls afforded young men and women the opportunity of coming to know one another well, but these "rambles" about the island are done now only by couples of the same sex—one of the several manifestations of institutionalized friendship. Choice once again seems to be intruding into matchmaking, however, with the increasing demands of acculturated youths for marriage with "love."

Matches are the end product either of secret bargaining between the families involved which can extend for weeks, or of the impetuous act of a man who—goaded by companions or by stout, or both—will visit the home of his "chosen" after dark to negotiate, accompanied by a kinsman or close friend. The bargain, once made, is sealed by the male participants with the emptying of a bottle of whiskey brought by the prospective groom, after which a boy or young man of the household is sent out—often after midnight—to summon relatives and acquaintances for a night long party, known as the *cleambnas* (the word for matchmaking in Gaelic). Sometimes this party is followed by as many as three more on consecutive nights, the expense for which is borne by the family of the bride-to-be. When the bargaining is protracted, it usually is done during the 12 days of Christmas or the final fortnight of Lent, and the match is announced soon after Epiphany or Easter. Hearsay concerning possible matches abounds at these times, but each year "most rumors are dry," unless, of course, "with a lot of drinking and urging a man might decide to take the plunge." It was customary in the past for the wedding to take place four days after the *cleambnas*, but now the service must wait from one to three weeks until the genealogies of the families of the bride and groom are examined by the parish priest to determine their degree of consanguinity.

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(Humphreys 1965:245). A far more forceful statement is that of Marvin K. Opler and Jerome L. Singer, wherein they address the etiology and consequences of the Oedipus configuration in the Irish family:

> The central figure in Irish families is more likely to be a controlling figure on the distaff side, while fathers, especially in straitened economic circumstances, are frequently by contrast shadowy and evanescent.... An Irish male... beset with anxiety and fear of female figures early in life, and lacking possibilities of firm male identification with a father, would later experience the sexual repressions and socio-religious definitions of marriage and sexuality for which his culture, with its high celibacy rates, protracted engagements, and sin-guilt emphasis, is justly famous.... all this spells a final anxious and fearful lack of positive sexual identification, varying in a continuum from repressed and latent homosexual balances through to added displacements and distortions that are either pallid asexuality or fearful and bizarre misidentifications.... Irish resistance to role identification... was seen as... having the imprint of anxiety in relations with persons of the opposite sex, ordinarily mothers and older sisters.... [The]... basic personality has stamped into it such feelings as male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females, and the kind of latent homosexual feelings which produce a further sense of sin and guilt... (Opler and Singer 1956:15–18).

Complementing the Oedipus complex is male solidarity, which has a long history in Ireland—revealed in legend, historical sources, and modern literature. Psychologists of Freudian bent see male solidarity as one of the many behavioral manifestations of the Oedipus configuration—based on "male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females," and "latent homosexual feelings;" but many anthropologists (especially functionalists) analyze it as a sociocultural phenomenon, for it is found in societies where the Oedipus complex appears not to exist. Elizabeth Coxhead, in discussing Lady Gregory's play, *Grania* (completed in 1912), alludes to the "tragic plight" of many Irish women, past and present:

> *Grania* is... a play in which a woman is ousted from an emotional relationship between two men. The "love" is that of man for man, of brother for brother; it is loyalty to the warrior band, and a corresponding resentment of the woman who takes away the warrior's freedom, makes trouble with his comrades, distracts him from his purpose in life. It is an attitude which filters through the play as light filters through crystal; which runs through the heroic Irish sagas... Its continuing validity was borne out by all Lady Gregory had observed in the world around her, the world of the "loveless Irishman," the peasant society which relegated women to serfdom, the middle-class intellectual society which left them only donkey-work.... it is not Finn alone who robs Grania of Diarmuid. "His desire was all the time with you yourself, and Almhuin." Almhuin, the charmed circle of hunters and warriors; its modern equivalent was the masculine society of clubs and bars, of wit and talk and stimulus, from which a woman... would be forever excluded... such a view of the Irishwoman's role, of her relegation to insignificance and her resentment under it, is not exclusively feminine. It is abundantly confirmed by Synge. His heroines... are creatures caged and raging, given no scope for their powers, condemned to love men who are poor things beside them and do not really care for them at all.... A woman has only to put her nose into a saloon bar... to realize that Almhuin is with us still (Coxhead 1961:145–146).

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581 Marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare in folk societies throughout the world, and this is illustrated in Inis Beag by two statements made to me by middle-aged, married men: one said that marriage is a matter of "making a good living," and the other that the attributes of an ideal wife are, "She keeps the fire going, has the tea ready, and listens to a man's troubles." Performing economic tasks, satisfying sexual needs, and rearing children are the *raison d'etre* for women according to most island men, but this does not mean 581 that affection between spouses is lacking. The relationship between most mates, 593 however, is one of "accommodation," and the affection, if present, lacks depth. It is said that "husbands and wives never walk together;" but my wife and I have observed two couples who often fail to observe this dictum, between whom conjugal love as defined in the Western tradition appears to exist. Intimate communication between mates is rare, as it is between most folk—including even mothers and sons and those who are allied through institutionalized friendship. [578] Several disputing husbands and wives have not spoken to one another, except formally, for many years. In the case of disputes of this sort—as well as those involving other kin in the household—the parties involved limit as much as possible both contact and cooperation between themselves rather than resort to abusive • [154] argument. Physical assault is unusual, but that the repressed wish to perpetrate violence may be widespread is attested by the delirious response of the islanders to the plot of John M. Synge's play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, when related to them; in it peasants of Co. Mayo laud the youthful "playboy, Christy" for apparently "slaying his da" (father) with a "loy" (spade). The act which so horrified viewers of nativistic persuasion in Dublin and Boston half a century ago arouses the opposite effect among the folk.

593 Women commonly express jealousy of and resentment against not only 461 what they consider the less time consuming and stressful work load of men, but 152 also the greater freedom enjoyed by their husbands. Many times women confided [562] to my wife that they are greatly distressed at being forced to remain home minding their children and performing tedious household chores, while their spouses range the entire island and the sea about it in their economic pursuits and are involved 829 in numerous social activities forbidden by custom to women. Some of these same 593 women expressed deep concern over being compelled by the unauthorized decree 562 of local curates, as well as by the sexual demands of their mates, to produce as [858] many offspring as possible; they complained that the constant bearing and rearing of children increase their work, restrict their freedom, and perpetuate the poverty 461 of their families. Few men whom we questioned were aware—or were willing to 562 admit—that such sentiments are held by their wives, but most men cited as one of the more attractive aspects of local life their being bossed by no one and being able to shift from one job to another among a wide variety to avoid boredom. Men are away from their homes much of the time, day and night, and they do far more "social" walking about the island, visiting relatives and acquaintances, and going to Inis Thiar and the mainland than do their spouses. Also, they frequent the pubs and attend the summer *céili* on the common land, which married women do not.

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779 The islanders know little of church dogma and the purport of rituals and feast days. What knowledge they do possess often is distorted, and they seldom read the Bible or manuals of instruction or engage in doctrinal discussions among
[122] themselves. I discovered by consulting priests and church histories, dictionaries,
[123] and exegeses—both before and during my stay in Inis Beag—that I came to know far more about the faith than any of the folk, and I sometimes imparted what I had learned to the curious in homes and even in the pubs. Instruction is welcomed by the islanders, but they dislike criticism from any quarter of their idiosyncratic Catholic observances, pagan retentions and reinterpretations, and non-Christian behavior. They also dislike being told, especially by returned emigrants, that "Catholic culture" in Ireland is quite unlike that in other parts of the world and arouses dismay and even incredulity in many foreign Catholics who visit Ireland.

771 The paths to salvation, according to the islanders, are threefold: obeying
793 the curate, performing the rituals of the church diligently and punctiliously, and
776 conforming to the moral laws of Christianity. Being saved, however, is to them
165 much more a matter of escaping Hell than of achieving Purgatory and eventually Heaven, and they experience more anxiety about failing to conform to the moral laws than pride in conforming to them. Furthermore, it is sins of thought rather than sins of deed which preoccupy them. While they boast of their morality as expressed in behavior, they labor under a heavy burden of guilt arising out of repressed sexual desires, jealousy and envy of their neighbors, and anti-clerical sentiment, among other attitudes. It is difficult for most of them to confess these to the priest, and thus their feelings of guilt and fear of damnation are compounded. Many times in Inis Beag I heard a "good Catholic" defined as one who "thinks mostly of death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell" and guides his conduct accordingly. Life on earth is regarded as merely a brief prelude to the "eternity stretching beyond the grave," to be lived only in preparation for the Day of Judgment and borne patiently in all its "pain and suffering." Priests and nuns are envied for many reasons, among them the fact that they can "spend most of their time preparing for death" and thus are in a better position to achieve salvation.

771 It is apparent to outside observers and to the folk alike that women are
562 more pious than men. They attend church more regularly, are more serious of
[829] mien at mass and during other religious observances, and are more prone to talk
[788] of religious matters than men. Many women go to mass daily, and it is said that all of the women of the island, but only ten men, have evaded going to Hell magically by attending mass nine Fridays in succession after Ash Wednesday (or, according to some, the first Friday in each month for nine successive months, or
• [154] the first Friday after Ash Wednesday for nine years in succession). The reasons for this are several, but the most important are that women are less contented than men and thus have a greater need for the solace that religion affords, and they are more restricted socially than men and by fulfilling various church obligations can escape household confinement and interact with other women. Some
771 828 islanders are thought to be overly pious—"wear their religion on their sleeves"—and are subjects of amusement and derision; those who use piety to cloak avarice

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boys and young men (attempts to hold their hands or kiss them, while under the influence of stout). Over a dozen efforts on the part of my wife and me to determine the truth behind the most pernicious rumors of this genre revealed sexual phantasy at their core in every case.

Church influence also is exerted through missions which come to Inis Beag every three to five years. On these momentous occasions, two Redemptorist priests (usually, but also Franciscans, Dominicans, and Passionists) spend a week in the island, where they conduct mass each morning and preach long sermons in the chapel every afternoon or early evening. Everyone—even old people and mothers with newborn infants—is urged to attend to receive the "blessings of the mission;" to some this means gaining time out of Purgatory for themselves or a deceased kinsman, while to others absence carries with it the penalty of damnation. A mission usually has a theme whose variations are explored with high emotion and eloquence by the visiting priests in their exhortations. The most common theme is "controlling one's passions," but abstaining from intoxicating drink and maintaining the faith as an emigrant also are addressed. Collections are made by children to support the endeavor, and a list of contributors and their donations is displayed publicly. It is said that a mission creates an emotionally charged atmosphere in the island which continues for weeks after the departure of the clerics.

The seeds of repression are planted early in infancy by parents through instruction supplemented by rewards and punishments, conscious imitation, and unconscious internalization. Although mothers bestow considerable attention and affection on their offspring, particularly on their sons, physical love as manifested in intimate fondling and kissing is rare in Inis Beag. Verbal affection comes to supplant contact affection by the time that the child can walk. Any forms of direct or indirect sexual expression—masturbation, mutual exploration of bodies, use of either standard or slang words relating to sex, and open urination and defecation —are punished severely by word and deed. Care is taken to cover the bodies of infants in the presence of their siblings and outsiders, and sex never is discussed before children of any age. Separation of the sexes starts within the family among siblings in early childhood, and is augmented by separation in almost all segments of adolescent and adult activity. Brothers come to associate mostly with brothers, and sisters with sisters, at play in and near the cottage, traveling to and from school, and in the chapel. Boys and girls are separated to some extent in classrooms and completely in play at recess. During church services, there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. Even on the strand during summer months, male tourists and vacationing emigrants tend to bathe at one end and women at the other; some swimmers change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses "daringly"—a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which bespeaks of sexual catharsis.

Parents and their school age offspring read the popular religious journals found in most homes, and many of the articles therein deal with sexual morality of the Irish Catholic variety. Several times my wife inadvertently inquired as to whether or not certain women were pregnant, using that word before children, only to be "hushed" or to have the conversations postponed until the young people could

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to procure stout and brandy (ostensibly a general purpose medicine in this case) in disguised containers to be consumed at home. The drinking of the men takes place, for the most part, in the pubs and at parties, and seldom is it indulged in to the extent that the imbibers become physically incapacitated. There were no cases of alcoholism in Inis Beag during 1959, according to the nurse. Although drinking obviously is done to combat depression and boredom, dissolve feelings of shyness and inferiority, alleviate the sense of sin and guilt, and overcome secretiveness which limits extroversion, the folk defend the practice by claiming that it makes them more articulate and convivial and thus better able to sing, dance, converse with one another, and tell stories. The often used phrases "to give us courage" and "great gas" connote just these benefits. In Ireland today, there are nearly half-a-million members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society—founded in that country 125 years ago—who have "taken the pledge" not to drink spirits in any form; they wear a small badge shaped like a shield which bears the emblem of the Sacred Heart. Twelve "Pioneers" in Inis Beag have taken a lifetime pledge and about 30 others a two year pledge not to imbibe. Most of these persons are old men, women, and boys. Young and middle-aged men who are members of the society are the objects of a good deal of indirect ridicule and direct jesting.

Folklore

As a result of acculturation, the Inis Beag esthetic tradition today is not nearly so rich as it was two generations ago, nor has it ever been as rich as those found in many other peasant areas of Ireland. The principal esthetic forms are folklore, music, and dance; lacking are the graphic and plastic arts, and of the crafts already considered only the knitting of ganzies, the crocheting of shawls, and *crios* making transcend sheer utility in their manufacture, according to the evaluation of island artisans. Myths, legends, folktales, and anecdotes among prose narratives, and song texts and proverbs, are the predominant genres of oral literature. There is no drama, while poetry, riddles, and jokes seldom are recited.

"Along the western shores of Ireland and Scotland . . . is preserved the oldest vernacular literature in Europe, north and west of the Alps. Along this tattered cultural frontier . . . [are] the last remnants of the most venerable body of orally preserved tradition in western Europe" (Delargy 1957:178). The Inis Beag folk share this body of folklore, and storytelling always has loomed large in the lives of the people. However, it had disappeared formally from the island by the time that my wife and I came, and we were never able to attend a traditional storytelling session, but had to reconstruct its institutionalized characteristics by plumbing the memory of one of the two aged narrators still alive. There are two types of Irish storytellers: the *scéalaí*, who recounts myths and legends of the mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and historical cycles, as well as ancient folktales; and the *seanchaí*, "who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies, social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings (Delargy 1945:6). In Inis Beag, the former type of storyteller was always male and the latter usually

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set deals with the place of origin and the religion of men and women whom islanders marry outside of Ireland, and the other concerns the frequency of marriage among those who have left the country.

Emigrants from Inis Beag have settled, for the most part, in Irish ethnic communities—near relatives—in large cities and their environs of the United States, England, Australia, and Canada. In the United States, these are greater Boston, Hartford, greater New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Oakland. The majority of them have had their transportation overseas paid for by relatives who emigrated before them and in whose communities they have made their new homes, and the first order of business for the newcomers is to repay the loans made to them for the journey. Of the first generation arrivals, 37.4 percent of them did not marry; of the remainder, 10.7 percent married fellow Inis Beag emigrants, 14.3 percent persons from Inis Thiar and other nearby islands, 40 percent Irish from the mainland, 8.9 percent Irish-Americans of the second generation and beyond, and 9.5 percent non-Irish. The unknown category is 16.6 percent and includes emigrants who no longer are in contact with their families in Inis Beag or who have married Protestants. As to the former, it is common for men to sever relations with their kinsmen at home when their mothers die, and even some daughters do so after they have been abroad a few years, especially those who have married non-Catholics or "foreigners." This reflects the Oedipus complex and religious and ethnic biases in the Inis Beag family, and runs counter to the assumption of nativists, primitivists, and functionalists who stress the strength of family ties in Ireland. The folk claim that no emigrant in human memory has married a Protestant, but I learned from islanders who had settled for many years in American communities of at least six who had done so.

Not only are the folk secretive about those of their number who have married Protestants after emigrating, but also about emigrants who have "lost the faith." By and large, these are young people who have emigrated to England since 1946; it seems that youthful emigrants before that time remained loyal Catholics, as have those who have gone to the United States recently. The widespread disaffection of Irish Catholics in Britain frequently is discussed in Inis Beag, and is blamed on the anonymity and "temptations" provided by the city. The "priest and gossip keep us faithful here" were the words of a man concerned about the rumored disaffection of his son in London.

During my last visit to Inis Beag in 1965, I discussed with over a dozen islanders some of the statistics that I had compiled previously and have reported herein. Without telling them the results of my analysis, I asked them whether more folk remained single in Inis Beag or abroad, and without exception they made the first choice. Their collective opinion is summed up by the remark of one that, "Here the old people interfere. They don't want to give up the land, and they don't want a new girl to come in. In America, the kids make up their own minds." Social scientists long have assumed that when emigrants from Ireland settle elsewhere, they soon come to marry as early and frequently as the people among whom they live, mostly because of changing economic conditions. But a single rate of 37.4 percent abroad, as compared to 28.6 percent in Inis Beag, belies both common and scientific sense. Certainly factors more important than economic ones

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[For information pertaining to emigration and its relation to sexual repression, late marriage, celibacy, and family relations in Ireland, see 17: Messenger, ER6 Rural Irish, category 116, pp. 32-36.]

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562 recess play and movement to and from school. During church services,
834 there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys
[858] and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. The
[864] pubs are frequented only by men or by women tourists and female teachers who have spent several years on the mainland while training and thus are "set apart" (and, of course, by inquisitive female ethnographers). Women occasionally visit the shops to procure groceries, but it is
[443] more common for them to send their children to do so, since supplies and drinks are proffered across the same counter, and men are usually to be
[484] found on the premises. Even on the strand during summer months, male
[526] tourists tend to bathe at one end and women at the other. Some swimmers
[291] "daringly" change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses—
[832] a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which has overtones of sexual
[184] catharsis.

• 154 It is often asserted that the major "escape valve" of sexual frustra-
[839] tion among single persons in Ireland is masturbation; frustration-aggres-
[273] sion theorists, however, would stress the ubiquity of drinking, alcoholism,
[733] disputes, and pugnacity as alternative outlets. Pugnacity can also be
[578] linked to the widespread problem of male identity. Our study revealed
83 that male masturbation in Inis Beag seems to be common, premarital
584 coitus unknown, and marital copulation limited as to foreplay and the manner of consummation. My wife and I never witnessed courting—
832 "walking out"—in the island. Elders proudly insist that it does not occur, but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on "petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the "bolder" of them kiss and fondle outside of their clothing. Island girls, it is held by their
[771] "lovers," do not confess these sins because they fail to experience
[626] pleasure from the contact. The male perpetrators also shun the con-
[783] fessional because of their fear of the priest.

833 We were unable to determine the frequency of marital coitus. A considerable amount of evidence indicates that privacy in the act is stressed and that foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the lower body, especially the buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated
[291] by the husband. Only the male superior position is employed; intercourse takes place with underclothes not removed; and orgasm, for the man, is
[12] achieved quickly, almost immediately after which he falls asleep. (I must stress the provisional nature of these data, for they are based on a limited sample of respondents and relate to that area of sexual behavior least freely discussed.)

000 Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies,

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[155] bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)

It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health" 158 reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria. 751 In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with [291] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear [834] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism [753] and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

514 Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evac-
827 uation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and
[863] animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that ha-
[825] bitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten.
[562] Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at
[273] parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most [241] carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed
237 feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the main-
372 land, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is
514 burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another
283 custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the
[462] secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

* 831 Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are
522 the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood
• [154] by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore
[123] sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub. Both step- and set-dancing are practiced in Inis Beag, although the former type is dying out. This rigid-body dancing, from which sex is removed by shifting attention below the hips, appears to have originated in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. The set patterns keep partners separated most of the time; but, even so, some girls refuse to dance, because it involves touching a boy. Inis Beag men, while watching a woman step-dance, stare fixedly at her feet, and they take pains to appear indifferent when crowding at a party necessitates holding women on their laps and rubbing against them when moving from room to room. But they are extremely sensitive, nevertheless, to the entire body of the dancer and to these casual contacts, as are the women. Their covert emotional reactions (which become overt as much drink is taken) are a form of catharsis.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS HISTORICAL CAUSES

Analysts of Irish character have put forth various hypotheses to account for sexual repression, ranging from the sophisticated to the absurd. The former can be classified under three rubrics: historical (e.g., the influence of ascetic monasticism, Augustinianism, and Jansenism), sociocultural (e.g., the Oedipus complex in the Irish family and male solidarity), and psychological (e.g., masochism). Beyond serious scientific consideration are such hypotheses as the loss of the Irish tongue, lack of a Catholic aristocracy, fear of Protestant libertinism, and the ever-appealed-to factors of race, climate, and the famine. In the following paragraphs, I will quote excerpts from Irish authors and from critical observers of the Irish scene, including social scientists, rather than dissect their views myself.

Paul Blanshard, in his polemical but insightful (and, in my estimation, often understated) work, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, says that "whatever the explanation, the total sexual expression of the Irish people is much less than it is in other countries, and that the Catholic crusade against normal sexual life has actually created a nation of men and women who try to drown their fundamental instincts." In attempting to account for sexual repression on such a scale, he writes:

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626 own words and actions in the presence of others so that the fires of factionalism are not ignited. Equally feared are informers of the curate and relatives or close friends of persons in an audience who might be offended by a heedless remark brought to their attention by the listeners.

83 It is sometimes heard in Ireland, from those aware of, and willing
• 154 to admit, the fact, that the inability of most Irish to "share themselves"
182 with one another, even husbands and wives, is a heritage of the fear of
[626] gossip—a fear that one's intimate revelations will become common knowledge and lead to censure and "loss of face." A more likely explanation, according to those of Freudian bent, is the Oedipus configuration, which numbers among its many effects the following: the prevalence of romantic attachments and the rarity of conjugal love; the lack of sexual foreplay, marked by little or no concern with the female breast; the brevity of the coital act and the frequent spurning of the woman following it; the need to degrade the woman in the sexual encounter and the belief that the "good" woman does not like sex, and, conversely, that the sexually disposed woman is by virtue of the fact "bad." All of these widely reported phenomena bespeak the overwhelming influence of the mother image.

157 Ridicule and opprobrium, as well as satire in song and tale, are
[626] effective control mechanisms in light of the emphasis placed by Inis Beag
[123] folk on saving face. Most islanders could not believe that I was author of the ballad referred to in footnote 5 because several stanzas attack my character; they find it difficult to conceive of anyone publicly proclaiming
[208] their own faults, under any circumstances. Opinions, once formed, are
[577] clung to tenaciously, even in light of obviating circumstances, since to alter them would be an admittance that they were ill advised in the first instance. The folk pride themselves on being able to judge a stranger's character immediately on meeting him, and this initial impression is
[533] rarely modified no matter how long their interaction continues. A seldom
[539] revealed tradition of satirical balladry exists in Inis Beag, but its employ-
[576] ment is infrequent and then calculated according to singer and audience so as not to offend directly. Apprehensiveness and anxiety about real and imagined ego assaults by others are dominant personality traits of the islanders.